

# OVERDRIVE

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April 2012 Volume 14 Issue 8 ₹ 125

**EXCLUSIVE TEST!**

Network **18**

## PAJERO SPORT

**MITSUBISHI TRAINS SIGHTS ON FORTUNER**



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Fiesta automatic vs Rapid & City ■ New Xylo vs Innova ■ BMW 640d ■ Geneva show round-up

OD RATING ★★★★★  
PRICE ₹ 24,61,000  
ex-showroom Mumbai

- ★ Styling & interiors
- ★ Spacious cabin
- ★ Rugged underpinnings
- Gearshift quality
- Handling
- Dealer network

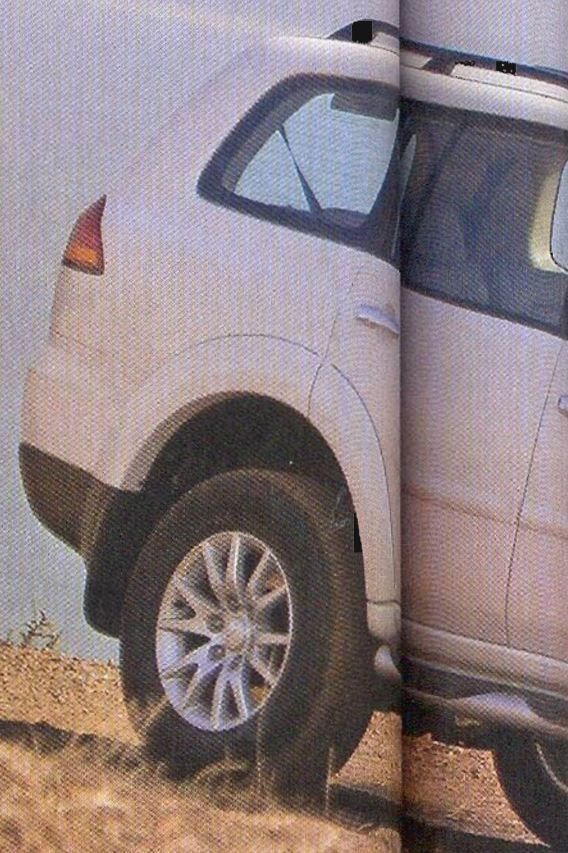
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# At last but not least

Four years after it was launched in Thailand and two years after we first drove and confirmed it was coming to India the Pajero Sport is finally here

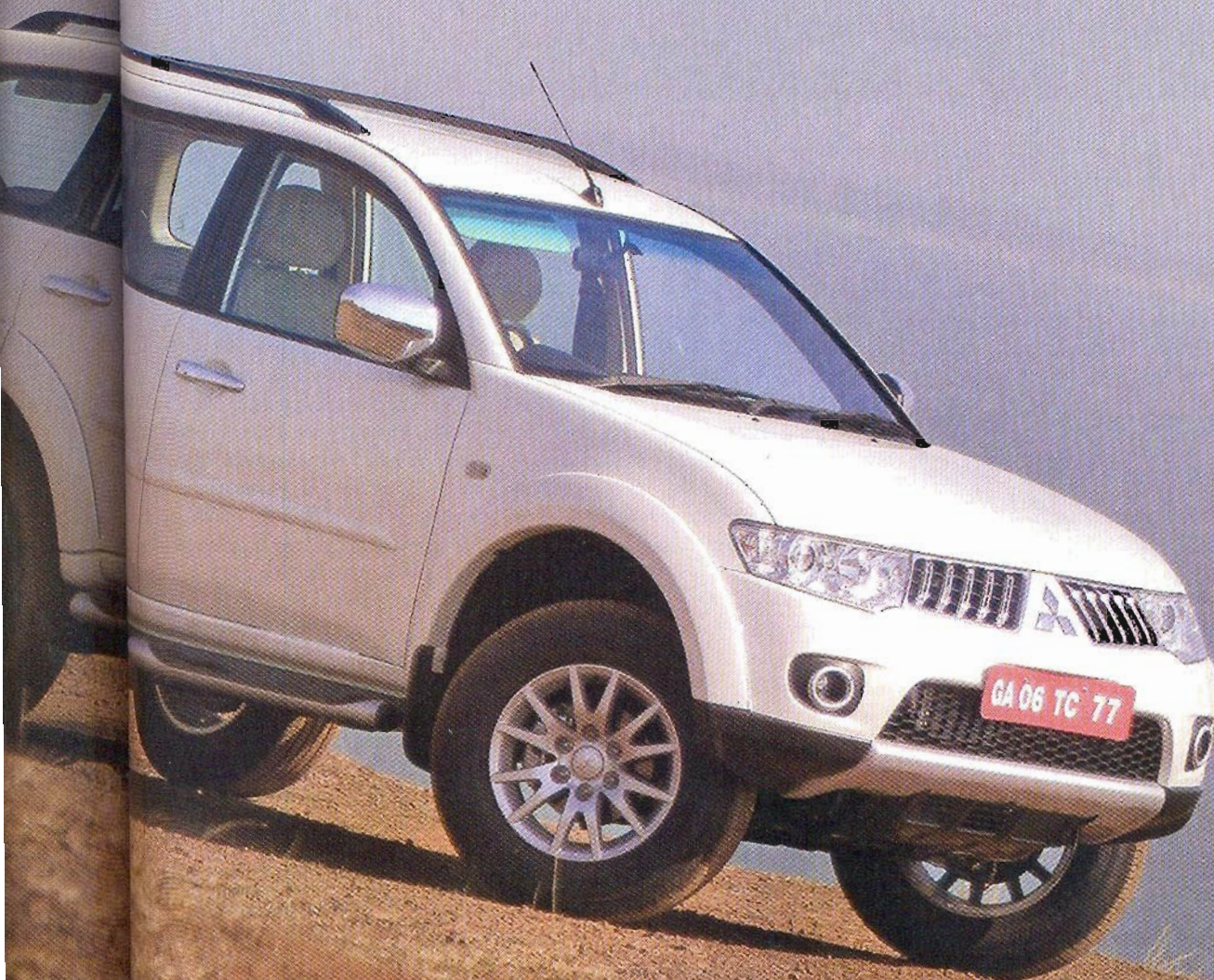
Words **Sirish Chandran** Photography **Gaurav Thombre**

**M**itsubishi might be a pale shadow of its former self but their greatest hits back catalog still has some prized - and revered - name plates. Lancer, particularly when suffixed with Evolution, will get every petrol heads' unwavering attention; rallyists in India will brook no trash-talk of the Cedia; and off-road enthusiasts still whisper Pajero

in respectful tones. Yet nobody, not even enthusiasts, buy Mitsubishi's anymore and the reason is simple: everything is dated, overpriced, burns the wrong fuel and have long since lost relevance to the Indian market.

However just when things looked beyond salvage the strongest nameplate in the cupboard has been dusted out, polished and given a fresh lease of life. The Pajero Sport, unlike what the name suggests, has nothing

to do with the Pajero, Montero or all those Repsol-liveried, Ralliart-fettled, Dakar-conquering machines - this is a completely different SUV line designed for the rough and tumble of emerging markets. In fact the design, engineering and underlying ethos have more in common with the Toyota Fortuner than any other Mitsubishi. Like the Fortuner which is based on the Hilux pickup platform the Pajero Sport too shares its platform with





Pajero Sport is suitably imposing and massive, which will appeal to the target audience

the Triton pickup. And just like Toyota who have concentrated manufacturing of the Hilux, Fortuner and its derivatives in Thailand (not Japan) to keep costs in check so too is Thailand the mother plant for the Pajero Sport from where completely built up units will be initially imported with CKD operations set to commence in Chennai from September.

## THE PAJERO SPORT HAS A FAIR DOSE OF STYLISTIC FLAIR AND GETS BETTER WHEN YOU STEP INSIDE

### DESIGN



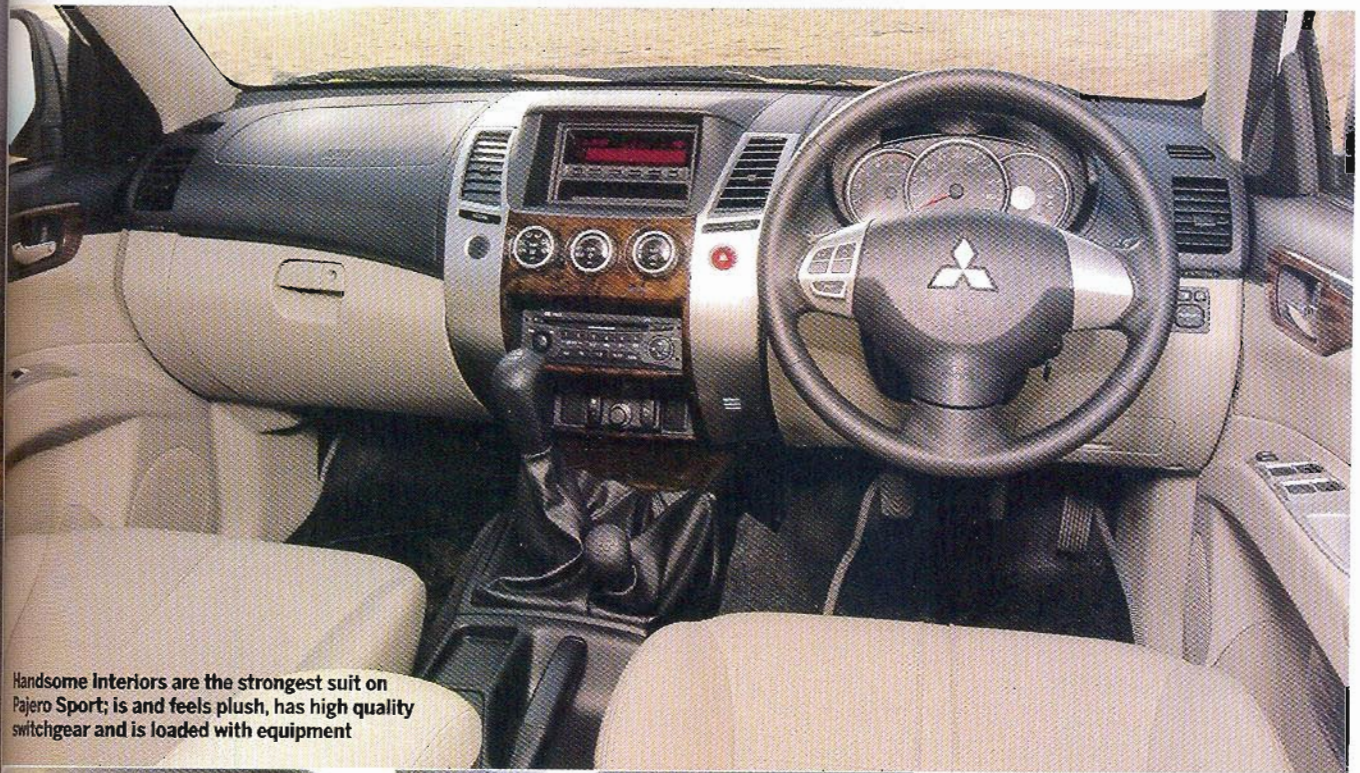
Mitsubishi have struggled to evolve a cohesive and coherent design language for its vehicles and stood amongst Mitsubishi's current Indian lineup the Pajero Sport bears no family resemblance. The grille for instance draws inspiration from the pre-facelift Outlander so had it come two years ago we could have alluded to a family grille. Except today the Outlander has the inverted trapezoid Evo X-inspired 'fighter-jet grille' which is far removed from the slinky grille on the Pajero Sport. But the weird thing is the new Out-

lander shown at this year's Geneva motor show draws a styling line back to the old Outlander's grille! Confusing but buyers in this segment needn't be too worried for the Pajero Sport looks fresh, imposing and appropriately massive on the road.

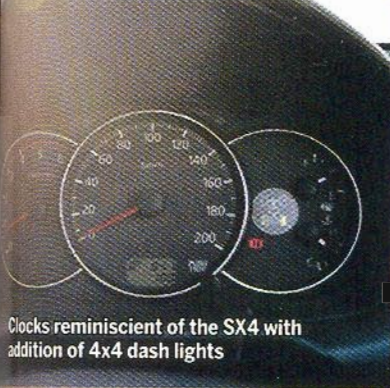
It's a testimony to the inherently correct styling that even though is four years old now there is no danger of it being termed dated. That old Mitsubishi grille - chrome laden to good effect - is flanked by attractive clear lens headlamps with projector lamps. The short front overhang, blunt rounded-corners for the nose and lack of any bonnet scoops gives it a friendly visage while the aluminium sump guard and sheer size of the SUV hints at off-roading potential. In profile this is appropriately beastly with 17-inch rims housed in massive wheel arches with equally massive wheel arch gaps. Stick your head in there (easily done) and you can see the rails for the ladder frame chassis. The running boards are innocuous and neatly executed while the rear has slinky Alfa Romeo-esque tail lamps. The tailgate opens upwards forcing the spare wheel to be mounted under the SUV cleaning things up and making for a rather attractive silhouette. Unlike its main rivals that rely solely on intimidating size and presence the Pajero Sport has a fair dose of stylistic flair and it gets even better when you step inside.

You are greeted by a typical Mitsubishi cabin which means high quality switchgear, plush beige leather upholstery and upmarket furnishings. If at all the Pajero Sport shares components it is with the Outlander and that's a good thing for a ₹ 20 lakh plus SUV ensuring buyers won't feel short changed. Mitsubishi have in fact gone all out to ensure the cabin scores over its rivals but in chucking in whatever they could lay their hands on they might have gone a bit overboard. So the wood-finished centre console is flanked by aluminium-effect panels and there is a smattering of wood on the door pads too. I'd have preferred either wood or aluminium, not both, but overall this is a cabin that I'm immediately attracted to.

The steering wheel is nice to grip and equally nice to look at and has audio controls (though cruise control has been deleted). The dials are neat and easy to read and looks immediately familiar because it is very much like the Maruti SX4's. There's single-zone climate control, twin front airbags, an old-school lever for the four-wheel-drive, a multi-information display that has a compass, barometer and altimeter and a terribly dated looking stereo that spoils what is an otherwise excellent cabin. What's even more bizarre is that this is a high-end USB-compatible 420W stereo (no AUX or Bluetooth connectivity though) with eight speakers



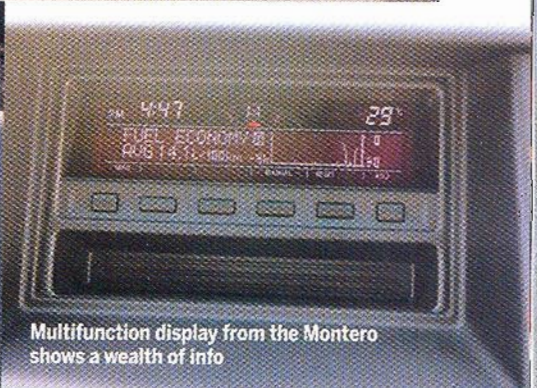
Handsome Interiors are the strongest suit on Pajero Sport; is and feels plush, has high quality switchgear and is loaded with equipment



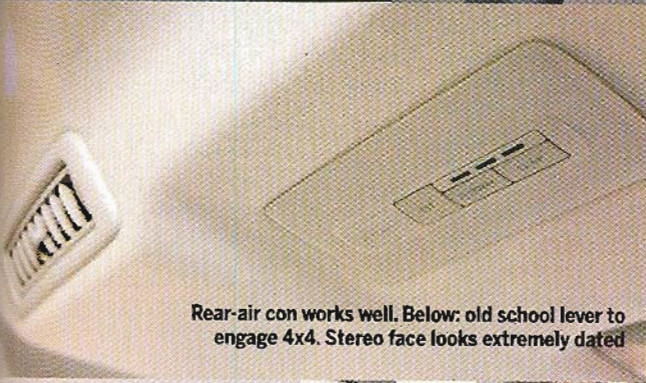
Clocks reminiscent of the SX4 with addition of 4x4 dash lights



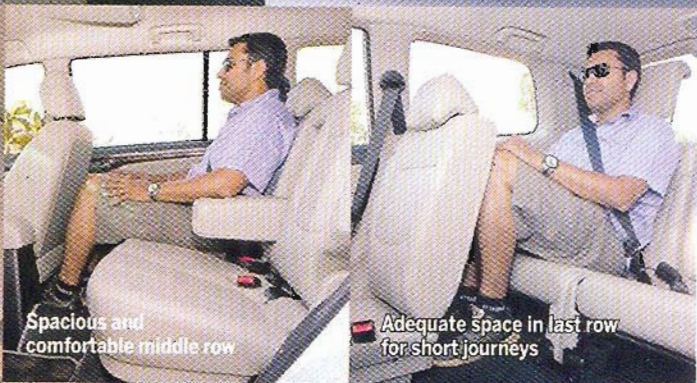
Audio controls on the steering wheel which is similar to Outlander



Multifunction display from the Montero shows a wealth of info

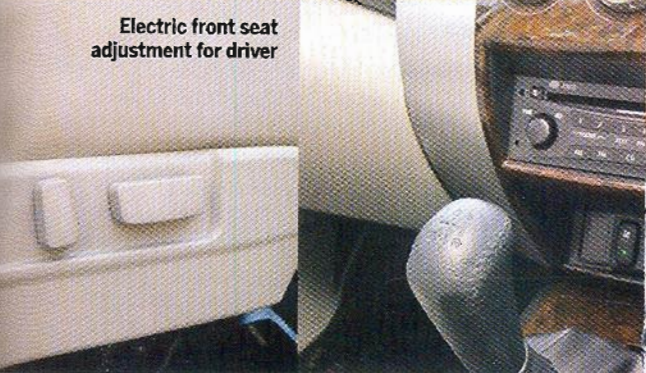


Rear-air con works well. Below: old school lever to engage 4x4. Stereo face looks extremely dated

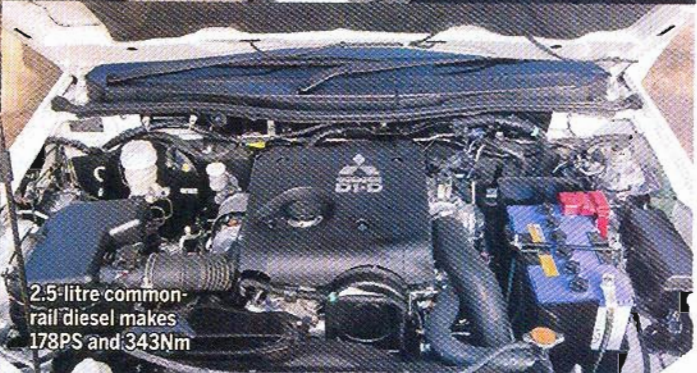


Spacious and comfortable middle row

Adequate space in last row for short journeys



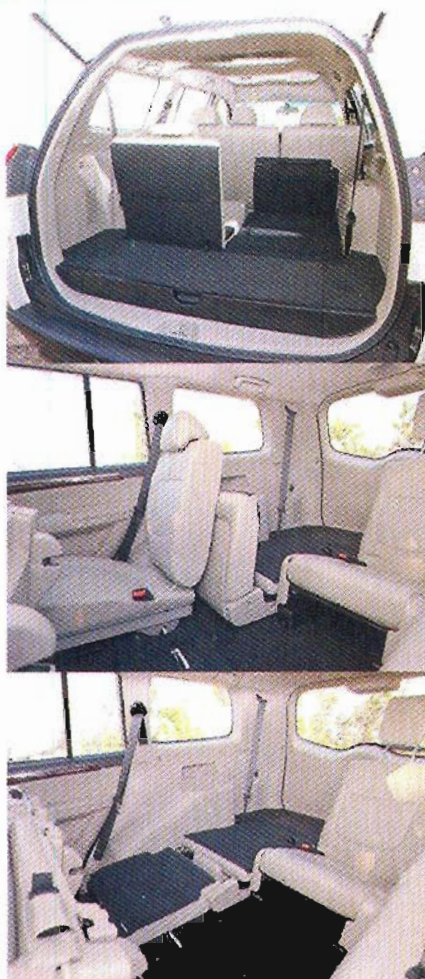
Electric front seat adjustment for driver



2.5-litre common-rail diesel makes 178PS and 343Nm



Old-school ladder frame chassis delivers ponderous handling and lots of body roll



and an amplifier that can even make FM sound good, but just looks horrible.

Seating is plush and extremely comfortable with lots of space up front and in the middle row. A conveniently located lever requires minimal effort to fold and flip down the middle row permitting easy access to the third row. Due to the high floor the last row isn't very ergonomic requiring knees to be folded to the chest and full sized adults will only be able to endure short journeys though kids will be okay over long trips. There is a separate rear air-con to keep passengers cool at the back.

With all three rows in place the boot can still take soft bags but fold the third row flat into the floor and flip up the middle row and boot space increases quite massively.

#### DYNAMICS



Even though it is based on the Triton pickup's ladder frame chassis a significant amount of re-engineering has gone into giving the Pajero Sport better dynamics. Up front there are double wishbones while leaf springs at the rear are ditched for a three-link

**Decent boot space with third row up. Third row is split 50:50 and folds flat while middle row is split 60:40, flips and tumbles to liberate a huge and flat loading bay**

setup with coil springs. Anti-roll bars are used front and rear but the overall handling is ponderous.

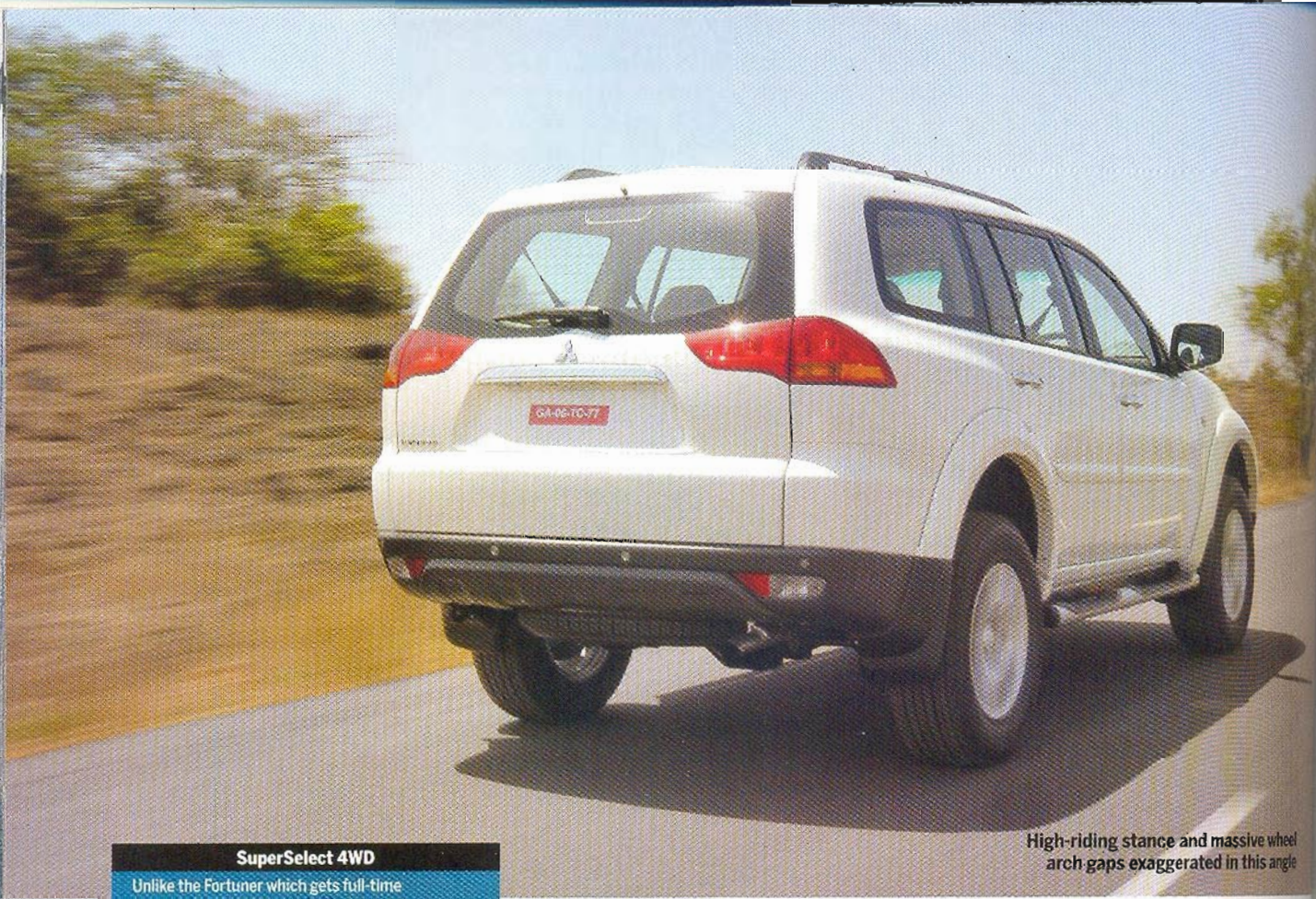
The chassis offers a low level of mechanical grip to start off with and small bumps can cause big problems pitching the SUV into the direction of oncoming traffic. Understeer is doled out early and generously, there's a fair bit of body roll, lots of lateral weight transfer, the steering doesn't tell you much and you hardly get any confidence to push it hard

## IT IS BASED ON THE TRITON PICKUP TRUCK PLATFORM WITH SIGNIFICANT RE-ENGINEERING

round the twisties. It feels every bit as big as it looks though that said it isn't much worse than the Fortuner and in fact is better than the Endeavour.

The steering requires a surprising amount of twirling to elicit a response and with a 11.2 metre turning circle this is never going to be an easy vehicle to manoeuvre through narrow city lanes.

The long suspension travel does offer a pliant ride quality and it makes for a very comfortable highway cruiser. The high-set



High-riding stance and massive wheel arch gaps exaggerated in this angle

### SuperSelect 4WD

Unlike the Fortuner which gets full-time four-wheel-drive the Pajero Sport is rear-wheel-drive, the reduction in transmission losses improving fuel efficiency while cruising on the highway.

A short stubby lever next to the gear lever operates the SuperSelect 4WD that permits shifting into four-wheel-drive at speeds up to 100kmph. The dynamic 50:50 torque split delivers better traction when the roads turn slippery delivering confidence and safety in inclement weather. 4HLc mode locks the centre differential distributing power equally to all four wheels and ensuring they turn at the same speed which is beneficial in rugged off-road conditions where traction is at a premium. However if you lock the centre diff on tarmac the transmission will get chewed up while going round corners.

Stop, hoick the lever all the way forward (decidedly old-school in operation) and it engages low-ratio doubling the torque going to all four wheels and delivering tractor-like pulling power to get the Pajero Sport out of the trickiest and stickiest conditions. In 4LLc the Pajero Sport can climb up a 35 degree incline and that's serious stuff. Allied to the 36 degree approach angle, 25 degree departure angle, 23 degree break-over angle and 45 degree lateral travel angle the Pajero Sport is a seriously capable mountain goat. The only thing that the Indian vehicles lack is the optional rear differential lock.



driving position, 215mm of ground clearance and the indestructible feel that a pickup platform offers allows you to barrel over all sorts of roads imperviously and without fear of anything breaking off.

### POWERTRAIN



The Pajero Sport I drove two years ago in Thailand had the 3.2-litre common-rail diesel engine mated to a four-speed automatic gearbox that delivered strong and effortless performance (it's the same setup in the Montero) but Indian customers will have to make do with a 2.5-litre 4D56 four-cylinder DOHC diesel mated to a five-speed manual. Thankfully this engine has nothing to do with the current Pajero's 2.8-litre turbo-diesel and is significantly more refined and powerful.

What we get is the 'high-power' version of the 2.5 engine which makes 178PS of power and 400Nm of torque. By way of comparison the Fortuner dishes out 171PS and 343Nm even though it has a bigger three litre engine and that means the Pajero Sport is quicker to 100kmph taking 12.1 seconds. We might have got even better figures had the ECU allowed the engine to rev above 3000rpm with the clutch depressed and thus launch it with more vigour. We registered a top speed of 171kmph though you do need a long enough stretch of road to max her out.

What the figures don't reveal is that the engine needs to be worked hard to get the best out of it. Peak power is developed at 4000rpm and though peak torque stays flat from 2000 to 2500rpm this engine needs revs to get going. And there's a lot of weight to haul around with the Pajero Sport weighing over two tonnes.

## WE GET THE 'HIGH-POWER' VERSION OF THE 2.5 ENGINE WITH 178PS OF POWER AND 400NM OF TORQUE

Revved hard the engine gets noisy and unrefined while throttle responses are lethargic at best. It lacks the effortless surge of torque that is a hallmark of the Fortuner and worse the 5-speed manual isn't slick requiring a firm shove to engage gears.

Since the Pajero Sport doesn't have full-time four-wheel-drive it delivers better fuel efficiency: 12.8kmpl is its claimed ARAI fuel efficiency as opposed to 12.57kmpl of the Fortuner.

Braking is handled by 16-inch discs up front and 16-inch drums at the rear, backed up by ABS, which brings it to a stop in 47.37m from 100kmph without any fuss or drama.

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## Mitsubishi Pajero Sport

## Specifications

Engine	
Type	4 cylinder, turbo charged diesel DOHC
Installation	Inline
Valvetrain	4-valves/cylinder
Displacement	2477cc
Bore x Stroke	91.1mm x 95.0mm
Comp ratio	16.5:1
Max power	178PS@4000rpm
Max torque	400Nm@2000-2500rpm
PS/Litre	71.86PS/litre
Power/Weight	86.19PS/ton
Fuel	Diesel

## Gearing

Gear	1st Ratio	2nd Ratio	3rd Ratio	4th Ratio	5th Ratio	Diesel (rpm)	4000rpm (kmph)
1st	4.113					16.834	8.60
2nd	2.330					9.126	16.03
3rd	1.633					6.625	16.91
4th	1.000					3.917	37.26
5th	0.756					3.085	47.41

## Drivetrain

Transmission	5-speed manual (4wd and 2wd selectable)
Final Drive Ratio	3.917
Reverse Gear Ratio	4.220
Rpm@90kmph in 4th	2409

## Chassis &amp; Body

Type	Ladder
Brakes Front	16" ventilated disc
Brakes Rear	16" ventilated disc
Assist	ABS with ebd
Wheels	17x7.5J
Tyres (F/R)	265/65 R17 & 265/65 R17
Steering	Hydraulic power steering
Overall ratio	40.02
Turns lock to lock	NA
Turning circle dia	5.6M

## Suspension

Front	Double wishbone with coil spring
Rear	Three link with coil spring



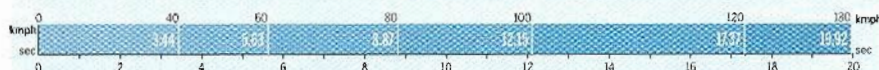
Price as tested

₹ **24.62 lakh** ex-showroom Mumbai

## Performance

## Acceleration

0-400m 18.56s/124.20kmph Standing 1km: NA



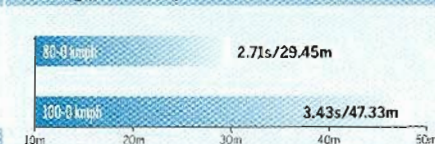
## Economy (kmpl)



## In-gear roll on

Kmph	4th	5th
40-50	6.11s	5.02s
50-60	3.95s	5.55s
60-70	2.73s	4.62s
70-80	2.31s	3.38s
80-90	2.40s	3.58s
90-100	2.59s	3.49s

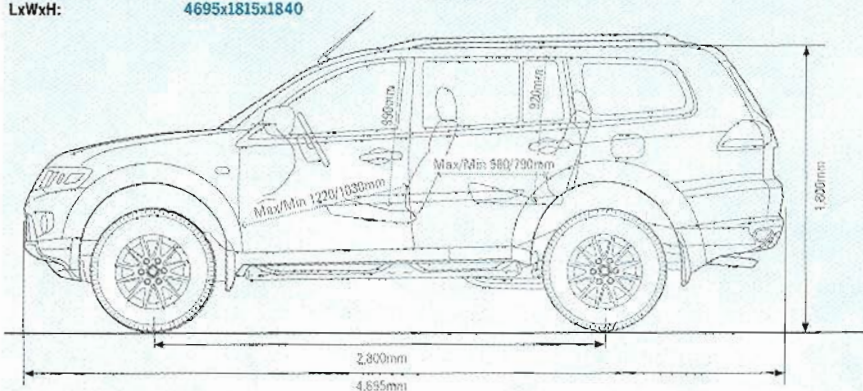
## Braking (with ABS)



Top speed 171kmph

## General data

Seating capacity	7	Shoulder space	1230mm
Kerb weight	2065kg	Ground clearance	215mm
LxWxH:	4695x1815x1840		



Top two road test	Mitsubishi Pajero Sport	Hyundai Santa Fe	Toyota Fortuner
Price	₹ 24.62 lakh	₹ 24.09 lakh	₹ 21.84 lakh
Power	178PS@4000rpm	197PS@3800rpm	171PS@3600rpm
Torque	400Nm@2000-2500rpm	421Nm@1800rpm	343Nm@1400rpm
0-100kmph (sec)	12.15	11.1	12.9
Top Speed (kmph)	171	179	169.1
Fuel Consumption	12.8	9.15	11.9
Kerb Weight (kg)	2065	1868	1955
Rating	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★★★

## VERDICT ★★★★★

For HM-Mitsubishi and their dealers this is a make or break vehicle - and fortunately for them the Pajero Sport ticks all the right boxes. It is stylish and imposing, the interiors (save for the stereo face plate) are excellent, it is spacious and comfortable, delivers brisk performance (at the expense of a little driveability), has tremendous off-road capability and though it doesn't handle like a rally-bred vehicle neither do its main competitors. Crucially it offers a fresh alternative to buyers turned off by the Fortuner's ubiquity.

If there's one fly in the ointment though it is the pricing: ₹ 24.62 lakh ex-showroom which, when you add the higher road tax applicable to CBUs (CKD operations only start in September), bumps the price up to ₹ 30.06 lakh on-road in Mumbai. That's over five lakh rupees more than the Fortuner which, slice it as you may, is hard to justify and will prove to be its biggest stumbling block in the months to come. **DD**